



NOAA's National Ocean Service

ROUNDTABLES

THE FUTURE: SUSTAINING a NATIONAL OCEAN POLICY

In the last year, two landmark reports -- the Pew Ocean Commission's *America's Living Oceans: Charting a Course for a Sea Change*, and the *Preliminary Report* of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy — have been released. These reports examine the broad range of issues impacting the nation's coastal and ocean resources, and make significant recommendations for improvements in the framework for ocean governance. If fully implemented, these recommendations will lead to a more coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policy.

NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) is well positioned to play a major role in implementing many of these recommendations. NOS's programs cover a broad range of scientific, technical and management activities. Its capabilities include applied ocean research, operational monitoring of the physical, chemical and biological parameters of the ocean environment, charting the nation's coasts and waterways, building and maintaining the nation's geodetic control system, and providing states with financial and technical assistance to build local management capacity. NOS also responds to and restores damage from environmental accidents, provides balanced protection for some of the nation's most valuable coastal and ocean resources, and works with foreign partners to share mutually beneficial approaches and technology.

NOS is leading efforts in the development of integrated ocean observation and modeling systems, providing new and innovative navigation products and services, and advancing marine resource conservation and assessment through its ocean and coastal management programs. NOS is also using a variety of creative communication approaches to engage and educate the public about the importance of balancing the environmental and economic well-being of the nation's coastal resources and communities.

A New Vision for the National Ocean Service

To respond to this new prescription for ocean governance, NOS has created a challenging vision for its future — to be a **Global Leader in Integrated Management of the Ocean**. This vision will provide a focus for the agency to apply its diverse resources to proactively address the growing pressures impacting coastal and ocean resources.

NOS developed this new vision not only in anticipation of the recommendations from the Pew and Ocean Commission reports, but also because of NOS's view that the ocean stewardship community is converging in its recognition of the urgency of ocean and coastal problems. The vision was first developed by NOS's senior managers in the fall of 2003. In the last six months, the vision has been refined through a running dialogue among both the senior managers and the employees of NOS.

The NOS vision supports the larger NOAA vision, *"To move NOAA into the 21st Century scientifically and operationally, in the same interrelated manner as the environment that we observe and forecast, while recognizing the link between the global economy and our planet's environment,"* and is consistent with the four NOAA mission goals, which are to:



N O S

W o r k i n g f o r A m e r i c a ' s C o a s t s

- *protect, restore and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystem-based management;*
- *understand climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond;*
- *serve society's needs for weather and water information; and*
- *support the nation's commerce with information for safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation.*

Defining Key Terms

A first step in conveying the vision to NOS constituents and its employees has been to define what NOS understands the important terms in the statement to mean. Thus, by:

GLOBAL, we mean NOS...

- ...employees are recognized for world- class expertise;*
- ...is global in influence and impact;*
- ...actively seeks opportunities to work collaboratively with other nations;*
- ...undertakes work that is global in geographic scope;*
- ...is a proactive participant in international ocean policy formulation and governance; and*
- ...is committed to learning from international partners.*

LEADERSHIP, we mean NOS...

- ...provides a challenging vision for the future of ocean stewardship;*
- ...leads by doing — creating tools, sharing information and knowledge, building partnerships;*
- ...attracts followers to its vision;*
- ...identifies emerging issues in ocean management;*
- ...is innovative and creative in developing solutions;*
- ...provides financial and human resources when needed; and*
- ...empowers public and private users.*

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT, we mean NOS...

- ...promotes, through its products and services, balanced decisions on ocean stewardship through a continuous, interactive, and adaptive process that engages all stakeholders and considers the full range of issues and concerns.*

OCEAN, we mean NOS...

- ...focuses primarily on coastal watersheds, estuaries, and ocean waters of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and secondarily on upland areas and the blue waters of the deep ocean.*

Priority Themes In constructing this vision, the NOS senior managers identified six priority themes around which the agency will focus. These themes play to NOS's strengths, address many of the ocean community's most pressing issues, and will most quickly advance NOS's contribution to the Pew and Ocean Commission recommendations. The six themes are:

OBSERVATIONS

NOS will be a global leader in designing and implementing an Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), incorporating both in situ and remotely sensed measurements that provide valuable information for protecting and managing ocean and coastal resources.

MODELING

NOS will be a global leader in applying existing models, and developing new ones, to forecast ocean and coastal conditions to meet the needs of resource managers and commercial and recreational users.

TECHNOLOGY

NOS will be a global leader in identifying, tracking, applying, and promoting the use of existing, new, and emerging technologies that enhance our ability to understand ocean and coastal ecosystems and result in more effective management of these resources.

COASTAL COMMUNITIES

NOS will be a global leader in providing technical and financial assistance, products, services, and expertise to coastal communities seeking balanced ocean and coastal resource management decisions, and in actively promoting the value of a watershed- and ecosystem-based approach to management.

PARTNERSHIPS

NOS will be a global leader in forging partnerships across all stakeholder sectors in the ocean community — including government, academia, private sector, nongovernmental organizations, international partners, and private citizens — to maximize the impact of individual efforts and ensure resource management decisions are made in an integrated manner.

EXPERT WORKFORCE

People are the foundation of NOS's success. Therefore, NOS will continue to invest in training and career enhancement, offering opportunities for NOS staff to lead at all levels in the ocean community.

STRENGTHEN MISSION

As a global leader in integrated management of the ocean, NOS will be proactive in responding to opportunities to strengthen its capabilities and capacity to deliver the full range of products and services commensurate with its mission.

In summary, NOS will realize its vision through **OBSERVATIONS**, **MODELING**, and support for **COASTAL COMMUNITIES**, by employing innovative **TECHNOLOGY**, engaging in beneficial **PARTNERSHIPS**, and maintaining an **EXPERT WORKFORCE**.

Converting the Vision into Reality

Working to be a **Global Leader in Integrated Management of the Ocean** has to be more than a slogan. NOS has begun developing a place-based strategy comprised of both existing activities and new efforts that will move NOS toward fulfilling its new vision.

The seven NOS Program Offices and two Staff Offices have identified more than 40 existing projects that exemplify one or more of the key terms of the vision, and reflect one or more of the six priority themes. These activities include developing Automated Underwater Vehicle (AUV) technology for shallow-water hydrography; supporting sensor fusion approaches (combining Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR), digital photography, and hyperspectral imaging); building operational forecasting systems for harmful algal blooms; launching a comprehensive maritime heritage program; and working with EPA and local coastal communities in three different coastal regions to promote redevelopment of contaminated port and harbor areas under the Portsfield Initiative.

Proposed new efforts include working with state, local, and academic partners to demonstrate the benefits of a regionally focused integrated ocean observing system, and creating a fully compatible watershed/ocean spatial framework to support both scientific and ocean management analyses. NOS also plans to sponsor a series of ocean technology showcases, topical workshops, and international technology symposiums to promote the use of existing, new, and emerging technologies.

Over the next three months, NOS senior managers will be exploring, first among themselves and then with constituents, how best to integrate these and other activities into a more comprehensive approach to providing the best possible products and services to the ocean community. Once this strategy has been fully vetted, NOS will move forward in making its vision a reality.